WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device, the method comprising the steps of:

    loaning removable digital storage media to a customer for storing digital image data captured by a digital image acquisition device;

    receiving, upon return, the removable digital storage media from the customer; and

    maintaining information associated with the loan and return of the removable digital storage media and the customer.

2. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 1, wherein the removable digital storage media is lent at a first rental location and received at a second rental location.

3. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 2, wherein the first rental location and the second rental location are the same location.

4. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 2, wherein the first rental location and the second rental location are different locations.

5. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 2, wherein the

removable digital storage media is associated with
an identification code.

      6. A method of renting removable digital
storage media for use with a digital image
acquisition device according to Claim 5, wherein the
identification code associated with the removable
digital storage media is securely stored on the
removable digital storage media.

      7. A method of renting removable digital
storage media for use with a digital image
acquisition device according to Claim 5, wherein the
maintaining step further comprises assigning the
identification code to the removable digital storage
media.

      8. A method of renting removable digital
storage media for use with a digital image
acquisition device according to Claim 5, wherein the
maintaining step further comprises:
      assigning an identification code to the
customer;
      associating the identification code of the
removable digital storage media with the
identification code of the customer when the
customer is lent the removable digital storage
media; and
      disassociating the identification code of
the removable digital storage media and the
identification code of the customer when the
removable digital storage media is received from the
customer.

      9. A method of renting removable digital
storage media for use with a digital image

acquisition device according to Claim 5, wherein the maintaining step further comprises:

removing the identification code of the removable digital storage media from inventory of the first rental location when the removable digital storage media is lent by the first rental location to the customer; and

adding the identification code of the removable digital storage media to inventory of the second rental location when the removable digital storage device is received by the second rental location.

10. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 9, wherein information associated with the inventories of the first and second rental locations is stored in a data store which is accessible by any of a plurality of rental locations.

11. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 10, wherein the maintaining step further comprises the steps of:

assigning an identification code to each of a plurality of rental locations;

associating the identification code of a removable digital storage media with the identification code of a rental location when the rental location receives the removable digital storage media; and

disassociating the identification code of a removable digital storage media from the identification code of a rental location when the rental location lends the removable digital storage media.

12. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 11, further comprising balancing the inventory of the first and
5   second rental locations.

13. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 12, the
10   balancing step further comprising the steps of:
determining a number of removable digital storage media located at each of the first and second rental locations; and
transferring removable digital storage
15   media from the first rental location to the second rental location when it is determined that the first rental location has an excess number of removable digital storage media and the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage
20   media.

14. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use with a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 13, the
25   balancing step further comprising requesting a transfer of removable digital storage media from a first rental location by a second rental location when it is determined that the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital
30   storage media.

15. A method of renting removable digital storage media, the method comprising the steps of:
loaning removable digital storage media to
35   a customer for storing digital data;
receiving, upon return, the removable digital storage media from the customer;

processing the digital data stored on the
returned removable digital storage media; and

maintaining information associated with the
loan and return of the removable digital storage
media and information associated with the customer.

16. A method of renting removable digital
storage media according to Claim 15, wherein the
processing step further comprises making the digital
data contained on the received removable digital
storage media available to the customer.

17. A method of renting removable digital
storage media for use in a digital image acquisition
device according to Claim 16, wherein the processing
step further comprises the steps of:

transferring the digital data contained on
the removable digital storage media received from
the customer to another digital storage media; and

providing the other digital storage media
containing the transferred data to the customer.

18. A method of renting removable digital
storage media for use in a digital image acquisition
device according to Claim 16, wherein the processing
step further comprises the steps of:

uploading the digital data contained on the
removable digital storage media received from the
customer to a computer server; and

providing the customer with access to the
computer server.

19. A method of renting removable digital
storage media for use in a digital image acquisition
device according to Claim 16, wherein the processing
step further comprises emailing the digital data
contained on the removable digital storage media

received from the customer to one or more email accounts specified by the customer.

20. A method of renting removable digital storage media for use in a digital image acquisition device according to Claim 16, wherein the processing step further comprises printing the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media received from the customer using an image forming apparatus.

21. A method of renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 15, wherein the processing step further comprises the step of erasing the digital data contained on the received removable digital storage media.

22. A method of renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 15, wherein the processing step further comprises the step of verifying the functionality of the received removable digital storage media.

23. A system for renting removable digital storage media at a first rental location to a customer for storing digital image data captured by a digital image acquisition device and receiving, upon return, the removable digital storage media at a second rental location from the customer, the system comprising a maintenance system for maintaining information associated with the rental and return of the removable digital storage media and the customer.

24. A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 23, wherein the

removable digital storage media is associated with
an identification code.

     25.   A system for renting removable digital
storage media according to Claim 24, wherein the
identification code associated with the removable
digital storage media is securely stored on the
removable digital storage media.

     26.   A system for renting removable digital
storage media according to Claim 24, wherein the
maintenance system further assigns the
identification code to the removable digital storage
media.

     27.   A system for renting removable digital
storage media according to Claim 24, wherein the
maintenance system further comprises:
     an assignment system that assigns an
identification code to the customer; and
     an association system that associates the
identification code of the removable digital storage
media with the identification code of the customer
when the customer is lent the removable digital
storage media, and disassociates the identification
code of the removable digital storage media and the
identification code of the customer when the
removable digital storage media is received from the
customer.

     28.   A system for renting removable digital
storage media according to Claim 23, wherein the
maintenance system further comprises an inventory
system that removes the identification code of the
removable digital storage media from inventory of
the first rental location when the removable digital
storage media is lent by the first rental location

to the customer and adds the identification code of the removable digital storage media to inventory of the second rental location when the removable digital storage device is received by the second rental location.

29. A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 28, wherein information associated with the inventories of the first and second rental locations is stored in a data store which is accessible by any of a plurality of rental locations.

30. A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 29, wherein the maintenance system further comprises:
an assignment system that assigns an identification code to each of a plurality of rental locations; and
an association system that associates the identification code of a removable digital storage media with the identification code of a rental location when the rental location receives the removable digital storage media and disassociates the identification code of a removable digital storage media from the identification code of a rental location when the rental location lends the removable digital storage media.

31. A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 30, further comprising a balancing system for balancing the inventory of the first and second rental locations.

32. A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 31, the balancing system further comprising:

a determination system that determines a number of removable digital storage media located at each of the first and second rental locations; and

a transferring system that transfers removable digital storage media from the first rental location to the second rental location when it is determined that the first rental location has an excess number of removable digital storage media and the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage media.

33. A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 32, the balancing system further comprising a requesting system for requesting a transfer of removable digital storage media from a first rental location by a second rental location when it is determined that the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage media.

34. A system for renting removable digital storage media to a customer for storing digital data and receiving, upon return, the removable digital storage media from the customer, the system comprising:

a processing system that processes the digital data stored on the returned removable digital storage media; and

a maintenance system that maintains information associated with the loan and return of the removable digital storage media and information associated with the customer.

35. A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 34, wherein the processing system further comprises a producing system for making the digital data contained on the

received removable digital storage media available
to the customer.

        36. A system for renting removable digital
storage media for use in a digital image acquisition
device according to Claim 35, wherein the processing
system further comprises:
        a transfer system that transfers the
digital data contained on the removable digital
storage media received from the customer to another
digital storage media; and
        a provision system that provides the other
digital storage media containing the transferred
data to the customer.

        37. A system for renting removable digital
storage media for use in a digital image acquisition
device according to Claim 35, wherein the processing
system further comprises:
        an upload system that uploads the digital
data contained on the removable digital storage
media received from the customer to a computer
server; and
        a provision system that provides the
customer with access to the computer server.

        38. A system for renting removable digital
storage media for use in a digital image acquisition
device according to Claim 35, wherein the processing
system further comprises an email system that emails
the digital data contained on the removable digital
storage media received from the customer to one or
more email accounts specified by the customer.

        39. A system for renting removable digital
storage media for use in a digital image acquisition
device according to Claim 35, wherein the processing

system further comprises a print system that prints the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media received from the customer.

5   40. A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 34, wherein the processing system further comprises an erasure system that erases the digital data contained on the received removable digital storage media.

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41. A system for renting removable digital storage media according to Claim 34, wherein the processing system further comprises a verification system that verifies the functionality of the
15   received removable digital storage media.

42. Computer-executable process steps stored on a computer-readable medium, the computer-executable process steps to rent removable digital
20   storage media to a customer for storing digital image data captured by a digital image acquisition device and to receive, upon return, the removable digital storage media from the customer, the computer-executable process steps comprising code to
25   maintain information associated with the loan and return of the removable digital storage media and the customer.

43. Computer-executable process steps
30   according to Claim 42, wherein the removable digital storage media is associated with an identification code.

44. Computer-executable process steps
35   according to Claim 43, wherein the identification code associated with the removable digital storage

media is securely stored on the removable digital
storage media.

45.   Computer-executable process steps
according to Claim 43, wherein the code to maintain
further comprises code to assign an identification
code to the removable digital storage media.

46.   Computer-executable process steps
according to Claim 43, the code to maintain further
comprising:
code to assign an identification code to
the customer;
code to associate the identification code
of the removable digital storage media with the
identification code of the customer when the
customer is lent the removable digital storage
media; and
code to disassociate the identification
code of the removable digital storage media and the
identification code of the customer when the
removable digital storage media is received from the
customer.

47.   Computer-executable process steps
according to Claim 46, the code to maintain further
comprising:
code to remove the identification code of
the removable digital storage media from inventory
of a first rental location when the removable
digital storage media is lent by the first rental
location to the customer; and
code to add the identification code of the
removable digital storage media to inventory of a
second rental location when the removable digital
storage device is received by the second rental
location.

48. Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 47, the code to maintain further comprising:

code to assign an identification code to each of a plurality of rental locations;

code to associate the identification code of a removable digital storage media with the identification code of a rental location when the rental location receives the removable digital storage media; and

code to disassociate the identification code of a removable digital storage media from the identification code of a rental location when the rental location lends the removable digital storage media.

49. Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 48, the code to maintain further comprising code to balance the inventory of the first and second rental locations.

50. Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 49, the code to balance further comprising:

code to determine a number of removable digital storage media located at each of the first and second rental locations; and

code to transfer removable digital storage media from the first rental location to the second rental location when it is determined that the first rental location has an excess number of removable digital storage media and the second rental location has a deficient number of removable digital storage media.

51. Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 50, the code to maintain further

comprising code to request a transfer of removable
digital storage media from a first rental location
by a second rental location when it is determined
that the second rental location has a deficient
5   number of removable digital storage media.

       52.   Computer-executable process steps
stored on a computer-readable medium, the computer-
executable process steps to rent removable digital
10   storage media to a customer for storing digital data
and to receive, upon return, the removable digital
storage media from the customer, the computer-
executable process steps comprising:
       code to process the digital data stored on
15   the returned removable digital storage media; and
       code to maintain information associated
with the loan and return of the removable digital
storage media and information associated with the
customer.
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       53.   Computer-executable process steps
according to Claim 52, wherein the code to process
further comprises code to make the digital data
contained on the received removable digital storage
25   media available to the customer.

       54.   Computer-executable process steps
according to Claim 53, wherein the code to process
further comprises:
30   code to transfer the digital data contained
on the removable digital storage media received from
the customer to another digital storage media; and
       code to provide the other digital storage
media containing the transferred data to the
35   customer.

55. Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 53, wherein the code to process further comprises:

code to upload the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media received from the customer to a computer server; and

code to provide the customer with access to the computer server.

56. Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 53, wherein the code to process further comprises code to email the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media received from the customer to one or more email accounts specified by the customer.

57. Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 53, wherein the code to process further comprises code to print the digital data contained on the removable digital storage media received from the customer.

58. Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 52, wherein the code to process further comprises code to erase the digital data contained on the received removable digital storage media.

59. Computer-executable process steps according to Claim 52, wherein the code to process further comprises code to verify the functionality of the received removable digital storage media.